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"Oh, yes!" And yet this person ought to have as valid and pronounced a set of American preferences as any of her countrywomen.

Alas! probably she has. They all seem willing to go, if only they can hit on a reasonable excuse and a satisfactory prospect. It must be for the same reason that makes the Needle of Cleopatra and Goringe lean a little longing dip toward the Nile and the Pyramids every evening at sundown. The Needle knows that the greatest climate in the world for development is one of the worst for preservation, and that things that have been perfected beyond any reasonable prospect of improvement are likely to last longer in some less stimulating atmosphere than this. Our women, as all the world concedes, have attained a wonderfully close approximation to perfection. With so much to keep as they have, and so comparatively little to gain, we ought not to wonder, perhaps, that so many of them would be willing, under favorable circumstances, to go and dwell where time is somewhat less edacious than it is with us.

EDWARD S. MARTIN.

"CLAIMS OF LONG DESCENT."

To any one who does not consider the vanity inherent in human nature it is astonishing to note the number of people, even in this country, where every man is a sovereign, who lay claim to royal descent. The third edition of "Americans of Royal Descent" has recently been issued, with 900 pages and several additional pedigrees. Not so very long since a Richmond (Va.) paper had several columns giving in great and edifying detail the pedigrees of divers and sundry families in that State who ran back their genealogical line to some king of England. And farther North the *nouveaux riches*, overwhelmed with all the good things of the present, and feeling secure for the future, not infrequently proceed to provide for the past also by purchasing themselves a comfortable pedigree with some king as a *terminus a quo*. These genealogical acquisitions, like the similar traditional claims of the F. F. V.'s in the Old Dominion, are deemed by the public exceedingly doubtful. Tennyson (himself of undoubted royal ancestry) has said:

"From yon blue sky above us bent
The grand old gardener and his wife
Smile at the claims of long descent."

While claims of royal origin could be of no benefit to the claimants if proven, and certainly could be of small credit, seeing that the average royalty has been a rather disreputable character, there is another side to this question which has been little considered. And that is that these claims, notwithstanding public incredulity, are probably all true. Let us consider. William the Conqueror ascended the throne of England A. D. 1066. Allowing thirty-three years as a generation, there have been twenty-six generations since, counting his children then living as the first generation. Many people leave several children, others leave none. It is certainly not an immoderate calculation to average each descendant as leaving three children. For if each descendant with his wife left only two children, the population would have stood still, whereas the less than a million inhabitants of the British Isles of that day have grown to be nearly forty millions there, and seventy millions on this side of the water. William the Con-

queror had four sons and six daughters. Averaging each of these as having three children, with the same average for each of their descendants down to the present, and the ten children of William in the present or twenty-fifth generation, by a simple arithmetical calculation, would have 2,824,295,314,810 descendants now living in the British Isles, in America, in the colonies or wherever men of British descent are to be found. As this is fully 25,000 times as many as there are people of British descent on the globe there must be an error in the above calculation. There are two. First : while an average of two children to each descendant is too small since that average would have kept the population stationary, an average of three is too high, as that is an increase of fifty per cent. every thirty-three years, an average which few countries other than the United States could show. The second error is that intermarriages among descendants must be allowed for. Say that owing to these errors the result of the calculation is 25,000 times too much, it would still result that every man of the English-speaking race is descended from the Conqueror. Reduce it as much more as you like, and the chances are yet strong that any given man of your acquaintance, as well as yourself, is probably a descendant of the victor at Hastings. Carry the *propositus*—as lawyers call him—back a few generations further, say to Alfred the Great or Charlemagne, and the chances are almost inevitable that any given individual is their descendant. Indeed in the light of arithmetic it may be doubted if to-day there is any person speaking French, German, or English who is not a lineal descendant of Charlemagne. It is at least a mathematical certainty that to-day there lives no one in any civilized country who is not a lineal descendant of some king or other eminent historical character. So true is it that He has made “all people of one blood,” and so puerile are claims of any one whatever to superior descent over his neighbor.

The six wives of Henry VIII. of England came from three different countries and different ranks, but each, as well as Henry himself, was descended from Edward III. This fact is commemorated on the windows of the chapel of the Royal Palace at Hampton Court, as will be remembered by all who have been there. In London, too, there is to-day a butcher (and many others of like rank) who can prove unbroken lineal descent in a legitimate line from a king of England.

There is another view, too, of this matter. While taking any historical character as a *terminus a quo*, his descendants widen out in each generation like a pyramid from its apex ; yet taking any given person, yourself, for instance, and tracing back his ancestors in like manner, they double in each ascending generation till in a few hundred years they become “like sands on the seashore for multitude.” The first error in the above calculation as to descendants is eliminated. The ancestors in each ascending generation must be exactly double the number of those in the generations below it. The only error to be allowed for is the duplication of ancestors by intermarriage of relatives, till finally, by the operation of this fact in the remote past, the whole human race is narrowed to one pair for its origin. But taking each individual living to-day as the apex of an inverted pyramid, with his ancestors doubling with each ascending generation, those ancestors become countless. Putting the population of the British Isles in William the Conqueror’s day at 1,000,000 it may be doubted if any English speaking man breathes to-day who is not descended not only from William himself, but from each other of the great majority of the whole population

of that day. It is true families die out ; but if they survive and increase to the third or fourth generation, with each successive generation decrease greatly of course the chances of all the branches dying out. Even where descendants apparently fail in the direct line there always is a chance that descendants exist who have become obscure and been lost sight of, or there may be descendants through illegitimate and hence unrecognized descendants. Every man may safely count on the fact that among his innumerable ancestors are not only kings and other historical characters, but also as certainly tramps and criminals of every description. Fortunately criminals do not, as a rule, "live out half their days," and their line is more apt to become extinct in the first or second generation succeeding; yet he who

"The ancestral line would ascend
Will find it waxed at the other end
With some *lineal* progenitor."

True, indeed, it is that every man is descended not only from heroes, kings, princes, poets, but also as certainly from murderers and thieves. The doctrine of heredity has some force in it, but much that is called heredity is simply the effect of environment. A man may be a thief or the opposite because his father was such, but it is much more likely that his bent towards larceny or good works is due rather to his surroundings and early influences than to qualities transmitted in the blood. Inasmuch as the grandchild is only $\frac{1}{4}$, his son $\frac{1}{8}$, his son $\frac{1}{16}$, and his son $\frac{1}{32}$ (and so on in geometrical ratio) the possessor of inherited qualities from any given ancestor, the effect of descent speedily minimizes. Nothing is more absurd and unfounded than the claims of an aristocracy based upon the supposed continued transmission of virtues and talents, as in the British House of Lords, or of a monarchy, all of which have been founded by some great chieftain of his day. But more absurd still is the spectacle of any one individual seeking to attract imputed honor to himself by asserting claim to descent from one who held some post of honor centuries ago. If the chain of descent can be made out, countless others are equally as certainly descended from the same origin, and furthermore the claimant is equally as certainly descended from numerous disreputable characters, whose qualities he has the same chance to have inherited with those of his more conspicuous and honored ancestor. No conception is more false in fact than the current conceit that any man is descended from a single line of ancestors. The lines of descent approach infinity. And nothing is more certainly destroyed by the inexorable logic of figures than any assumed merit based upon "claims of long descent." We are not only all descended from Adam and Eve, but probably every German, Frenchman, Spaniard, Italian, and Anglo-Saxon is likewise a descendant of Julius Cæsar and Charlemagne. It is true royal dynasties have died out, but no account is taken of illegitimate descendants, usually numerous, in such cases. Besides, luxury and wars decimate dynasties, and intermarriages reduce the number of descending lines. Cæsar left no legal heir in the direct line, but according to what Suetonius and Plutarch tell us of him he doubtless left many descendants. Famine and war have destroyed whole populations, but when after a few generations a man's descendants have multiplied into many lines, no disaster could within any reasonable probability cut off all his descendants. These modern "claimants" have no monopoly. The beggar

next door is probably a genuine lineal descendant of Charlemagne. As Pope says :

"What can ennoble fools or slaves or cowards?
Not all the blood of all the Howards."

Or as Sancho Panza hath it :

"Every man is the son of his own works."

Every man leaving descendants who survive beyond the third or fourth generation will, in all probability, in a few centuries be one of the ancestors of every man of his nationality then living on the globe. But if there is any element of uncertainty as to a man's descendants there is none as to his ancestors. The "past at least is secure." Every man has necessarily had millions of ancestors, and equally of necessity has "royal blood in his veins."

WALTER CLARK.

WOMEN AND AMATEUR ACTING.

It is odd, but no one, I believe, as yet has taken up the question which occurs to me as a very pertinent and not altogether unimportant one; and this is in how far and in what way amateur acting reacts upon and modifies the amateur actress; how much or how little, and whether for good or for evil, this pursuit influences the pursuer; wherein the accomplishment serves to form the woman, and what are the accidental and incidental differences it imposes upon her character.

One of the most powerful tendencies of modern life is undoubtedly the profound, absorbing, mastering impulse—which rules the men and not infrequently overrules the women of our nineteenth century—the impulse to give forth, to give out, to express, to obtain that which fifty years ago would have carried an ineradicable odium in its train, but which to-day is as a laurel crown on her whose brows support it: I mean *notoriety*. The goal to be gained is, being talked about. The means to be employed, in the very nature of things, must be flagrant, blatant, intensely *en evidence*.

And what can present itself more apposite, other arts and accomplishments being, perhaps, out of reach or uncongenial, than amateur acting? The power of theatrical application is common enough. The power of dramatic insight is extremely rare. To be theatrical is both easy and usual. To be dramatic is both uncommon and also impossible unless one is guided by the rein of that divinity which hedges Genius to far more purpose than it oftentimes hedges kings.

I know of no amateur actress whatever who is in the least inspired by dramatic insight. I know of none who does not possess a fair share of theatrical perspicacity. Nor yet of one who exhibits, even when super-excited, the force sufficient to tear a passion to tatters—setting aside the rarer ability to epitomize that passion by a glance, a single word, or an intonation. Do what they will they fail ignominiously, utterly, completely, at doing that which they expressly set out to do; they cannot *act*, they cannot represent, they cannot live and breathe and be before our eyes the passionate or polished lives of the "people of the play." And acting—unfortunately for the amateur actresses—is (*pro tem.*) *being*, and it is not talking to an audience about what is.

To what degree the modern fad of amateur acting may be said to influence the characters of the women who have taken it up, it may not be difficult, but it may be distinctly distasteful (to them) to state. Amateur acting